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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 22
Issue 3 *September*

Article 17

September 1995

Contemporary Urban Sociology. William G. Flannagan.

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Recommended Citation

(1995) "*Contemporary Urban Sociology.* William G. Flannagan.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 3 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol22/iss3/17>

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BOOKNOTES

Rand D. Conger and Glen H. Elder, *Families in Troubled Times: Adapting to Change in Rural America*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1994. \$46.95 hardcover; \$23.95 papercover.

The economic upheavals of the 1980s had a pervasive impact on the lives of ordinary people in many parts of the country. Middle class flight and cutbacks in federal programs had negative consequences for inner city dwellers; the decline of traditional industries generated high levels of unemployment among blue collar workers; and in many rural areas, falling land and commodity prices hurt farming families that had worked the land for generations.

Concerned about the impact of deteriorating economic conditions on rural families, a group of sociologists at Iowa State University began in the mid-1980s to undertake research into the way economic decline affected family relationships and individual coping behavior. Their study, known as the Iowa Youth and Families Project, generated a wealth of information which will be of value to social scientists interested in knowing how families cope with the stresses induced by economic hardship. The project was based on theoretical perspectives drawn from life course studies and family sociology, and it utilized sophisticated research methodologies. Interviews were conducted with 451 families in the state. In addition to the interviews, video tapes and a variety of instruments and measurement scales were employed. Although the study identified significant differences in coping behavior between different families, it revealed that economic distress can have serious consequences on family relationships and especially the behavior of children. The authors conclude that in addition to economic support, counseling services are needed to assist rural families to cope with the economic crisis.

William G. Flannagan. *Contemporary Urban Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. \$49.95 hardcover, \$14.95 papercover.

Urban sociology is a well established field within sociology. Urban sociologists have collected vast amounts of statistical data

about urban life, formulated spatial models about urban growth and extensively analyzed urban social problems. They have studied urban political processes and contributed to the development of policies and plans for improving urban conditions. They have also formulated interesting conceptual approaches to analyze urban phenomena. Over the last century, distinctive theoretical perspectives have evolved to frame discussions about urban reality and to facilitating understanding of its many complex forms..

Flannagan's book deals primarily with the theories which have emerged within urban sociology since the end of the 19th century. The book is not, as its title suggests, an introductory survey of urban sociology, but instead offers a comprehensive and sophisticated account of theoretical developments in the field. It is eminently readable, useful and up to date. The author not only reviews familiar theoretical approaches such as the Chicago School's urban ecology approach but covers recent debates on structuration theory and post-modernism as they affect urban sociology. The book is essential reading not only for sociologists but for anyone interested in urban issues. These issues can only be properly grasped if the conceptual ideas underlying urban phenomena are properly understood. Flannagan's helpful book will facilitate comprehension of these ideas.

Gordon Marshall (Ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. \$11.95 paperback.

OUP's well-deserved reputation for publishing high quality dictionaries is maintained in this publication which manages to cover a huge subject matter in just one manageable and reasonably priced volume. Although many dictionaries of sociology are now available, this one will be an invaluable aid not only to students but to academic and professional sociologists, and indeed the public at large. Compiled by a team of sociologists at the University of Essex in England, the dictionary not only contains entries on key sociological terms and concepts but happily strays into ancillary fields such as economics, politics, social policy and the other social sciences as well. Its coverage is huge but the entries are both inclusive and concise. The inclusion of biographic entries is particularly helpful. Indeed, it is remarkable that these entries not only list sociologists but economists, anthropologists